Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

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GEARING UP FOR AGRIBITION

Preparations are well underway for the 36th annual Canadian Western Agribition (CWA) in Regina.

"It's a huge machine that kicks into gear, and we are now gearing up," said CWA General Manager Leon Brin.

"Right now we are into set-up mode. As we get closer and closer to the 20th, we bring more staff on. There are barns to be set up, the tradeshow component is established, there is lots of work to do," said Brin.

"Thankfully, we are blessed with a staff that is highly experienced. Most of the people are into the double-digits in terms of how many years they've spent here. There aren't too many surprises."

By the numbers, the show is pretty impressive: 4,000 head of livestock, 186,000 square feet of tradeshow with 450 exhibitors, and over 140,000 people expected to go through the turnstiles during the run of Agribition.

The theme of this year's show is "A World of Opportunity." Brin says that theme will be demonstrated by the number of international guests.

"I think the international profile that Agribition has built for itself over the past few years is going to pay off this year. I think we are going to see a bigger number of international visitors. We are getting a lot of inquiries from around the world," said Brin.

Brin says they won't know what the actual number will be until the international guests arrive and register, but they know the importance of putting international buyers together with Western Canadian sellers.

"If you look at the beef sector, for example, recent developments have led the industry to understand that it has to diversify its marketing. You can't just concentrate on one market," Brin observed. "The beef industry is focused on marketing itself to international clients, and are looking to Agribition to do whatever we can to encourage [international] potential buyers to attend in order to make the connections with exporters."

(more)

In 2005, 385 international guests representing 46 countries and 17 American states registered in the International Business Centre.

The full schedule of events for Agribition can be found at www.agribition.com. Agribition 2006 officially opens November 20 and runs until November 25 at Ipsco Place in Regina.

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NEW AWARD RECOGNIZES PROVINCE'S BEST HOG DRIVERS

The care and handling of animals beyond the farm gate is left in the hands of the transporter, who can significantly affect the health of the animals in their care. That's why the Saskatchewan Pork Development Board (Sask Pork) and the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan (FACS) are teaming up to hand out the first ever Award of Distinction for Hog Transportation Handling.

"The transportation process is very stressful for livestock, and the truckers' approach to animal handling makes all the difference," says Harvey Wagner, Producer Services Manager with Sask Pork.

With consumers increasingly wanting assurance that the food they purchase and consume was raised and cared for in a humane manner, it is important that every step in the production process remains careful and connected. Truckers and transporters are a vital part of that link, since losses from inadequate care or handling can cost the industry millions of dollars each year.

The selection process for the award is dependent on nominees meeting the following criteria: the forms must meet the deadline; the nominee must have completed the pork industry Trucker Quality Assurance (TQA) program; and the nominee must be seen to be doing an exceptional job of transporting live hogs.

"It's a seal of approval," says Wagner. "People like to be recognized for doing a good job, and it's time we gave out recognition for the transportation side."

Nominations can come from people in all the stages of the pork production chain: producers, employees of producers or processors, receivers like plants or assembly yards and companies all deal with hog truckers and could know someone deserving of recognition.

"The trucker is an important part in the process for reducing stress on animals, and, as we do with everything, we ask that they keep the animals in mind. We want to single out the best of the best," says Wagner.

(more)

Those who think they have a suitable candidate for the award can visit the Sask Pork (www.saskpork.com) or FACS (www.facs.sk.ca/welfare_awards) websites to download an electronic nomination form, or contact the FACS office at (306) 244-7752 to make a nomination by phone. Wagner says they have already received a number of nominations, but since this is the first year for the award, "we're looking for more."

If you know a transporter who is deserving of the Award of Distinction for Hog Transportation Handling, hurry: the nomination deadline is Wednesday, November 15, 2006. The award will be presented on December 12, 2006 at the annual general meeting of FACS in Saskatoon.

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SASKATCHEWAN SEEDING SYSTEM GOES INTERNATIONAL

Farmers in eastern Europe will soon be planting their crops with made-in-Saskatchewan equipment and technology, thanks to a new partnership between Seed Hawk manufacturing of Langbank and Swedish manufacturer Vaderstad-Verken.

Seed Hawk is the creation of Pat Beaujot, an agronomist and farmer from the Langbank area. The company began in 1992 with an idea to improve seeding technology. Seed Hawk equipment is now at work on some 700 farms, primarily in Western Canada.

Seed Hawk had been selling the vast majority of its equipment on the prairies. Just a few units were heading for Europe – until the principals of Vaderstad-Verken came looking for new products.

"The owner came over to look at seeding equipment built in Western Canada," said Beaujot. "They were starting to see some growth in eastern Europe, and they really didn't have a product line for that market." Vaderstad-Verken primarily served western European farmers, where average soil moisture is greater and field sizes are much smaller.

"It was flattering to hear that not only did they feel we had the best technology, but that we were the best company to deliver that technology," said Beaujot.

The result was an agreement which saw Vaderstad-Verken purchase a 49-per-cent equity interest in Seed Hawk Inc. The capital will be used to dramatically expand the manufacturing plant near Langbank in order to create the capacity that the new eastern European market will demand. With Vaderstad-Verken's significant distribution network, Beaujot is projecting sales growth of up to 300 per cent over the next two years.

Ground work has begun on the new manufacturing plant, with full construction scheduled during 2007. Seed Hawk will satisfy initial demand from its current facilities.

Seed Hawk currently employs 40 people, and Beaujot expects that workforce to increase by 20 to 30 more people during the next 16 months. The new relationship will also mean improvements to Seed Hawk's seeders, because they will gain access to proprietary Vaderstad-Verken technology for variable rate seeding.

(more)

Beaujot and his partner Brian Dean will retain controlling interest in Seed Hawk and manage all manufacturing. The two will also continue handling distribution within Canada, while Vaderstad-Verken will be responsible for international marketing.

Vaderstad-Verken is a privately-owned company that employs 450 people at its 25,000-square-metre plant in Sweden. It has eight subsidiary companies distributing farm machinery throughout Europe.

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PRODUCERS ENCOURAGED TO MONITOR STORED GRAIN

The crop is in the bin, but the question that some Saskatchewan producers are dealing with is: What else is in there?

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Crop Specialist Dale Risula says a number of conditions have combined to make stored grain monitoring more important than usual this year. Risula notes there have been reports of beetle infestations in stored grain from all over the province.

"The key is for farmers to harvest the grain dry, and to aerate it and try to get it below 15 degrees Celsius as quickly as possible, because, at that temperature, the grain beetles become inactive," said Risula. "To ensure that they lessen the likelihood of infestation, they should clean bins thoroughly, avoid putting new grain on top of old grain, and make sure the area surrounding the storage bin is clean and free of any spilled grain on the ground."

Beetles can also survive a winter under the bark of trees near a grain storage area, so spraying the trees with insecticide is another preventative option.

But the first line of defence is close monitoring, and Risula says temperature is a good indicator.

"Monitoring your grain is critical. Check it fairly frequently for any build up of heat. Temperature is really the key to know if anything is happening in the bin," said Risula.

The most uncontrollable factor of farming – weather – was a big contributor to the increased prevalence of grain beetles this year.

"The major reason for it has been the fact that last fall and the fall before saw the harvest take place under fairly adverse condition – that being the excessive frost or rain – which resulted in a lot of grain being harvested under inappropriate moisture and temperature conditions," said Risula.

"When it is harvested in that fashion and then not stored properly, it is subject to infestation of bugs and various grain beetles that feed on broken or whole kernels. The moisture and the heat migrate in a storage bin and accumulate in areas. Before you know it, you can have a situation where the grain begins to spoil fairly rapidly, and this is an ideal breeding ground for bugs," said Risula.

(more)

This year's harvest conditions are another factor.

"This summer, a lot of grains were harvested under hot temperatures and stored at too warm a temperature. The moisture content was okay, but the temperature was a factor, and that's why the beetle activity was so high. Because there were so many bugs around (due to the conditions in previous years), a lot of grain was infested this fall," said Risula.

With the market having no tolerance for grain beetles, producers have to deal with the issue. But Risula said the options become a bit more challenging when the beetles are already in the bin.

"There are only a few choices for farmers. They can treat chemically or culturally. All of the methods are slow, and all of them are incomplete in terms of their efficiency, except for one – the use of phostoxin. It is a fumigant that basically kills all of the bugs within the grain. However, the problem is that phostoxin requires a license to apply the product," explained Risula.

Cultural controls include moving the grain with grain vacuums, cooling the grain below minus 20 degrees Celsius or heating it above 50 degrees Celsius. That requires a lot of time and effort on the farmer's part, and is not always 100 per cent effective.

SAF has prepared a very thorough, useful guide to assist producers, entitled *Detecting Insects in Stored Grain*. It can be found in the "Crops" section of the SAF website at www.agr.gov.sk.ca, or obtained by calling the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.

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SHEEP DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING SERVES AS FORUM

A diverse and international slate of speakers is set to be a part of the 2006 Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board (SSDB) annual meeting and seminar, taking place December 1 and 2 in Saskatoon.

Colleen Sawyer, Manager of Extension and Marketing for the SSDB, says one of the more anticipated discussions will be the Pasture Lambing Forum on the afternoon of December 1. "We'll be talking about lowering costs and expanding your flock, and possibly how to change the time of year that producers lamb," said Sawyer. "It's going to be a real bonus to have people there who are presently doing it, so producers will have them present to ask questions and have discussions."

The SSDB is still confirming some speakers and participants, but one returning presenter is Dr. Chris Clark with the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Clark's seminar on December 1 will discuss common sheep and lamb diseases, as well as effective treatments.

"He's a very good presenter," said Sawyer. "He's got a very practical approach to veterinary care and he's very straightforward."

There will be opportunities to speak to each of the presenters throughout the meeting, but Sawyer says the best chance to ask an expert some questions or to have a good conversation will be at the Friday night social. "It's a good opportunity to talk to our presenters, and a great opportunity to get to know other sheep producers from the province."

The SSDB also holds its annual general meeting (AGM) on December 2. Sawyer says there are no pressing industry issues to discuss this year, because the sheep industry seems to be doing fairly well in Saskatchewan.

"Most people come to hear the reports," Sawyer noted. "We report on the various programs we're running and give an update on the whole year in the industry."

Information and trade show booths will also be set up for both days of seminars and meetings. Custom Woolen Mills, a custom processor out of Carstairs, Alberta, will have a booth at the event, and several feed and mineral businesses will also be represented.

(more)

The meeting and seminars should be of interest to anyone having anything to do with the sheep industry, from feed and feed sales to veterinary supplies. Up to 100 people are expected to attend, but registration is still available, and can be arranged by calling the SSDB office at (306) 933-5200.

Registration for Friday, December 1, is $35, which covers the day's seminars and lunch. Registration for Saturday, December 2, is $20, and also includes all seminars, the AGM and lunch. Registration for both days offers a price break: $50 for all of the activities.

A block of rooms at the host hotel, the Ramada Saskatoon, is reserved for the meeting, but attendees are advised to book the rooms early, as they will likely sell out.

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